

It took nearly 80 years, and an official expedition sanctioned by the government in 1870, to sort out the myth about Yellowstone from the striking reality.

Shortly thereafter, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the law in 1872 establishing Yellowstone National Park "as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people."

President Theodore Roosevelt, a great protector of the environment and treasures like Yellowstone, visited the park in 1903.

One hundred years ago this spring, he laid the cornerstone for the official gateway to the park. The gateway is still known as the Roosevelt Arch.

The American people's love of Yellowstone helped lead to the establishment of our National Park Service. Today the Park Service protects and preserves 83 million acres of natural treasures across our country.

The Park Service employees at Yellowstone have done a wonderful job of protecting the park's natural beauty, while providing opportunities for people to enjoy it.

For example, all of the large mammal species known to exist in Yellowstone before European Americans arrived have been restored to their natural habitats.

I recently had the good fortune, after many years, to once again visit Yellowstone National Park. I was only able to spend a couple of hours there, but it was a great experience.

I first went there shortly after my wife and I returned from law school in Washington. We traveled from Las Vegas on one of the first vacations we ever took.

I still look back with great awe at Old Faithful and the many other things we were able to see, the buffalos and other animals. So when I returned there, even though it was only for a few hours, the place I wanted to go visit again was Old Faithful.

Old Faithful spewed a few times during the time I was there. We took a walk through Geyser Park. We saw buffalo lying right near the geysers. The reason these great animals come and lie down near these spewing geysers is that, to a great extent, they keep the pests off themselves by doing so.

Even though I was there just a short time, it was wonderful again, after 25 years, to reflect back on my little children when they were tiny going there and visiting that park.

I am sure that millions of Americans also keep a special place in their hearts for Yellowstone and the memories it holds for them.

I hope our grandchildren's grandchildren will be able to enjoy the wonders of Yellowstone National Park, the way we do today.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SGT CORY R. MRACEK

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, SGT Cory R. Mracek was a dedi-

cated and distinguished soldier who loved the military and was excited to go to Iraq. He attended Chadron State College for one semester before joining the National Guard and then later, the U.S. Army.

He spent his first year in Korea, where he was awarded several medals. He was chosen to be a United Nations Command Honor Guard for 6 weeks, an honor for which only the best soldiers were chosen. He came home 4 years later and worked as a night stocker at Wal-Mart. However, army life was calling him and he missed it more than he thought. He re-enlisted and was again stationed in Korea for 12 months. Because of the war in Iraq, his tour was extended to 15 months. He returned to the States in October 2003 and proceeded to Ft. Benning, GA, where he trained to be a paratrooper. He loved the thrill the first time he jumped from the plane and it had been his dream to be a part of the 82nd Airborne Unit in Fort Bragg, NC. He had been in Iraq just 8 days when a roadside bomb exploded west of Baghdad and killed him and two other soldiers.

SGT Cory Mracek's sacrifice will forever remind this Nation of the danger that comes with the duty to protect our Nation's interests and the freedoms of other arounds the world. As a nation we are grateful to soldiers like Cory Mracek who make the ultimate sacrifice so that all Americans can live in freedom.

SGT DENNIS A. CORRAL

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, SGT Dennis Corral served our Nation bravely and honorably. He entered the Army in 1989 and later left the service to pursue other interests. In 1997 he re-entered the Army and was sent to Iraq in December of 2003. Corral was not scheduled for deployment to Iraq until January 2004, but he volunteered to go earlier in place of another soldier who was married and had children. Sergeant Corral was not one to complain, and readily accepted every task that was asked of him. His arrival was greatly anticipated by his company, as they had been without a supply sergeant, and were greatly in need of his skills. Immediately upon his arrival, he set to work improving the company supply system—organizing, filing, and issuing out equipment. In all that he did he showed his dedication and his love for serving his country. Sergeant Corral was the first American soldier to die in Iraq in 2004. SGT Dennis A. Corral will always be remembered as a soldier who fought for freedom and made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of his country.

THE SUPREME COURT'S REVIEW OF THE EXECUTION OF CHILD OFFENDERS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President I want to speak today on the Supreme Court's recent decision to review whether the execution of child offenders—those under 18 at the time the crime was

committed—is constitutional. The Court will soon hear the case of Christopher Simmons, a Missouri man who was sentenced to die for a crime he committed at the age of 17. The case is called *Roper v. Simmons*.

In the past few years, our Nation has taken important strides toward fairness and justice in the administration of the death penalty. In 2000, former Illinois Gov. George Ryan took the courageous step of halting executions in his State pending a top-to-bottom study of the use of capital punishment in Illinois. Following an exhaustive review of his State's system, Gov. Ryan commuted the death sentences of all death row inmates in Illinois in December 2002. Former Maryland Gov. Parris Glendening suspended executions in his State in the face of glaring racial and geographic disparities in the Maryland death penalty system. Current Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich has since lifted the State's moratorium, but an execution has not taken place in Maryland since 1998.

A number of State legislatures have inched closer and closer to abolishing the death penalty or instituting moratoria in their jurisdictions. And in 2002, in a significant turning point for our Nation, the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the execution of the mentally retarded. That decision, in the case of *Atkins v. Virginia*, confirmed that our Nation's standards of decency concerning the ultimate punishment are indeed evolving and maturing.

While these events are steps toward fairness and indications of progress, they also serve as reminders that our system is seriously flawed. The statistics and stories of innocent people wrongly convicted are shocking. In the modern death penalty era, 113 individuals in 25 different States have been exonerated after being convicted and put on death row. The most recent exoneration occurred just last week in a case from North Carolina. This should be disturbing to all Americans who believe in the founding principles of our Nation, liberty and justice for all.

As Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in a 2002 dissent, after the Court refused to consider another case involving child offenders, the practice of executing child offenders is "inconsistent with evolving standards of decency in a civilized society." In my view, Justice Stevens is right. Executions of child offenders have occurred in only eight countries since 1990: China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudia Arabia, Yemen, and the United States of America. Most of these countries, however, have since banned executions of child offenders, leaving the United States as the only country that acknowledges its use of capital punishment for child offenders.

According to Amnesty International, there have been 34 executions of child offenders since 1990—19 of them in the United States. And there are currently